

Message Text

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FOR IOP/M IEA, STATE FOR EA

SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION - PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

1. HONG KONG PAPERS AUGUST 7 GAVE PROMINENT AND EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S AUGUST 5 STATEMENT AND THE SUBSEQUENT CABINET MEETING. SEVERAL PUBLISHED EDITORIAL COMMENT.

2. BOTH ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MORNING DAILIES ACCORDED FRONTPAGE HEADLINE PLAY TO THE CABINET MEETING AT WHICH PRESIDENT NIXON ANNOUNCED HE WOULD NOT RESIGN. BOTH ALSO CARRIED NYTS ARTICLE FILED BY LESLEY OELSNER FROM WASHINGTON.

3. THE LEFTWING PRESS ORIGINATED NO COMMENT. THE SEMI-OFFICIAL WEN WEI PO RAN TWO REUTERS ITEMS ON LOWER SECOND PAGE, ONE ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS AND THE OTHER ABOUT THE CABINET MEETING. TA KUNG PAO ASSIGNED A FAIRLY PROMINENT FRONTPAGE POSITION TO REPORTS OF THE CABINET MEETING, MOUNTING PRESSURE FOR THE PRESIDENT'S RESIGNATION, ALLEGED PREPARATIONS FOR A RESIGNATION SPEECH, AND CARRIED EXCERPTS FROM NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST EDITORIALS SAYING NIXON'S FATE IS SEALED AND HE IS AT THE ROAD'S END. THE TWO LESSER PRO-PRC DAILIES FEATURED THE NEWS AS TOP INTERNATIONAL ITEM.

4. MOST RIGHTWING DAILIES GAVE THE NEWS EXTENSIVE FRONTPAGE
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COVERAGE. KUNG SHEUNG DAILY NEWS AND SING TAO JIH PAO

HEADLINES EMPHASIZED NIXON WILL NOT RESIGN. THE LATTER ALSO RUNS A COMPARISON OF VARIOUS WATERGATE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE PRESIDENT SINCE MAY 1973, POINTING TO DISCREPANCIES. THE CONSERVATIVE WAH KIU YAT PO PLAYED UP TASS TREATMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT. THE KMT-RUN HONG KONG TIMES CARRIED THE NEWS ON A FRONTPAGE TOPPED BY A LOCAL NEWS ITEM.

5. TREATMENT BY THE INDEPENDENT CHINESE-LANGUAGE PAPERS WAS SIMILAR TO THAT BY THE RIGHTWING PRESS.
FOLLOWING ARE PERTINENT EDITORIAL COMMENTS:

6. THE ENGLISH SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST IN A LEAD EDITORIAL ON MR. NIXON'S "LATEST GAMBIT" SAID: QUOTE

7. AS STAR OF THAT LONG-RUNNING MELODRAMA, THE WATERGATE CAPER, RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON CONTINUES TO TURN IN AN AMAZING PERFORMANCE.

8. AFTER NEARLY TWO YEARS, DURING WHICH EACH TWIST AND TURN OF A TORTUOUS PLOT REVEALED NEW FACETS OF POLITICAL SKULDUGGERY IN WASHINGTON UNDER THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION, IT SEEMED THERE COULD BE NO SURPRISES LEFT.

9. NOW, MR. NIXON'S CONFESSION ON MONDAY THAT HE DIDN'T QUITE TELL THE TRUTH -- NOT EVEN TO HIS DEFENDING LAWYERS -- THROWS THE PENDING DEBATE ON IMPEACHMENT INTO THE MELTING POT.

10. IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE EFFECT HIS LATEST STATEMENT WILL HAVE ON HIS ENEMIES THAT MATTERS (THEY, AFTER ALL, HAVE MADE UP THEIR MINDS AND WILL SEE THIS NEW ADMISSION ONLY AS PROOF OF THEIR CONVICTIONS), BUT WHAT WILL IT DO TO HIS FRIENDS?

11. MANY HAVE LOYALLY STOOD BY HIM IN THE BELIEF THAT WHEN HE MADE HIS PREVIOUS DECLARATIONS OF INNOCENCE HE WAS NOT ONLY TELLING THE TRUTH, BUT TELLING THE WHOLE TRUTH.

12. NOW, IN MR. NIXON'S OWN WORDS, HE SAYS THERE IS EVIDENCE TO SHOW THAT SOME STATEMENTS RECORDED ON TAPES ARE "AT VARIANCE WITH CERTAIN OF MY PREVIOUS STATEMENTS."...

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13. MR. NIXON BELIEVES THAT THE WHOLE PICTURE, "THE EVIDENCE... IN ITS ENTIRETY," WILL DISCLOSE NO GROUNDS FOR IMPEACHMENT.

14. THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WILL HAVE TO VOTE ON THE QUESTION WITH THE MATERIAL THAT IT HAS IN ITS POSSESSION. THE SENATE, IF MR. NIXON IS BELIEVED, WILL HAVE THE BENEFIT OF ALL THE EVIDENCE.

15. THIS PUTS THE ONUS SQUARELY ON THE SENATE AND IT WILL BE HERE, RATHER THAN IN THE HOUSE, THAT THE MOST CRUCIAL PART OF WATERGATE DRAMA WILL BE ENACTED. UNQUOTE

16. SURPRISINGLY, THE USUALLY CAUSTIC ENGLISH HONGKONG STANDARD MADE NO EDITORIAL COMMENT.

17. THE CONSERVATIVE WAH KIU YAT PO COMMENTED: QUOTE

18. ...NIXON'S...STATEMENT TELLS THE FOLLOWING POINTS: (1) NIXON LIED AND MADE FALSE SWORN STATEMENTS. (2) NIXON WAS CLEARLY AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE WATERGATE AFFAIR. (3) NIXON DID NOT FRANKLY STUDY POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS WITH THE REPUBLICAN PARTY OR WHITE HOUSE AIDES. (4) NIXON DOES NOT HAVE THE COURAGE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WATERGATE AFFAIR.

19. EVEN IF NIXON SHOULD WIN THE STRUGGLE IN THE SENATE AND ESCAPE IMPEACHMENT OR REMOVAL FROM OFFICE, IT WOULD BE PITIFUL AS WELL AS MEANINGLESS FOR HIM TO STAY ON AS PRESIDENT. ACTUALLY, NIXON FAILED ON THE VERY DAY THE WATERGATE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE. UNQUOTE

20. THE KMT-RUN HONG KONG TIMES SAID: QUOTE

21. ...HAD NIXON FRANKLY ADMITTED HIS MISTAKE AS SOON AS THE CASE WAS BROUGHT TO THE OPEN...AND HANDLED IT ACCORDING TO PROPER PROCEDURE, HE MIGHT HAVE WON THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE... BUT THE GRADUAL UNFOLDING OF THE TRUTH HAS SHOWN HIM AS THE TELLER OF MANY UNTRUTHS AT VARIANCE WITH EACH OTHER. NOW HE HAS LOST NOT ONLY ALL HIS CREDIBILITY BUT ALSO THE PEOPLE'S TRUST IN HIM... UNQUOTE

22. THE INDEPENDENT MING PO SAID: QUOTE
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23. ...THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT NIXON COMMITTED A GRAVE ERROR. WE FEEL THAT HIS ATTEMPT TO COVER UP THE SCANDAL WAS AFTER ALL QUITE HUMAN ALTHOUGH IT WAS VIOLATION OF THE LAW. IF YOU AND I WERE IN THE SAME POSITION, MOST LIKELY WE TOO WOULD TRY TO REDUCE THE MOUNTAIN INTO A MOLEHILL AND AVOID SENSATIONALIZATION. BUT SINCE THE MATTER HAD BECOME A BIG ISSUE, THE BEST WAY WOULD BE TO CONFESS HIS OWN MISTAKES, TELL THE TRUTH IN MAY LAST YEAR, APOLOGIZE TO THE NATION AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS...

24. NIXON'S ADMISSION MADE ONLY NOW HAS COME TOO LATE. EVEN IF THE SENATE DOES NOT VOTE TO IMPEACH HIM, HE HAS LOST THE PUBLIC'S CONFIDENCE AND CANNOT GO ON BEING THE PRESIDENT. UNQUOTE

25. THE INDEPENDENT SING PAO DAILY NEWS SAW THE NIXON CABINET

AS FACED BY A DIFFICULT DECISION OF WHETHER THE PRESIDENT SHOULD
REISNG. THE PAPER REMAKRED. QUOTE

26. IF HE DOES NOT RESIGN, WITH HIS SUPPORTERS ALL DESERTING HIM...
HE HAS LITTLE CHANCE OF SURVIVING THE LAST ROUND IN THE SENATE.

27. RESIGNATION, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD NOT ONLY MEAN PERSONAL
DEFEAT TO HIM BUT ALSO AFFECT THE FUTURE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN
PRESIDENCY, AS CONGRESS WOULD BE ABLE TO REMOVE THE PRESIDENT
AT WILL. UNQUOTE
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